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Letter dated 30 November 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instruction from my Government, I would like to bring the following to the attention of members of the Security Council.

The Rwanda Government welcomes the visit of the Security Council to the Great Lakes region. Rwanda believes that such visits to the region are very useful in enabling the Council gain a much better understanding of the challenges States in the region face with respect to peace and security, than the relatively distant and insular world of United Nations Headquarters in New York could every allow.

Rwanda also welcomes the signing of the Dar es Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region. It is our earnest hope that the process that began in Dar es Salaam on 20 November will culminate in genuine and durable peace, security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes region, and the wider continent of Africa. We welcome the determination by the heads of State present at Dar es Salaam to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all States in the region and to prevent the use of their territories for subversive and destabilizing activities against other States by armed groups. We also welcome their commitment to fight against genocide in the region, and to disarm and arrest the perpetrators of genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

Rwanda's sovereignty and territorial integrity continue to be violated with relative impunity by forces operating from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Despite numerous Security Council resolutions, the ex-FAR/Interahamwe forces continue to operate from, and receive supplies on, the territory of a State Member of the United Nations. Moreover, they continue to recruit, train and inculcate their nefarious genocidal ideology into many others, including young people and children who did not physically participate in the genocide of 1994. The eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has therefore become a recruiting ground and crucible for the ideology of hate, destruction and extermination in our region. This state of affairs is unacceptable.

Over the past three months, these genocidal forces have carried out a series of attacks on Rwanda territory. They have killed our people and continue to destroy property. Furthermore, in their planning, these forces not only intend to attempt to complete the genocide of 1994, they have also targeted key infrastructure, vital for Rwanda's economy.

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The Security Council will recall that, on 15 November, the ex-FAR/Interahamwe launched a series of Katyusha rocket attacks from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo into a Rwanda village, causing civilian casualties. A few months ago, this force together with its allies from Burundi attacked a refugee camp at Gatumba and killed 160 civilians, among them young children and women. In April and May of this year, the same force attacked three provinces in Rwanda, stole property and terrorized civilians. Today these forces are massed along the Congolese side of our common border, poised for an attack on Rwanda.

The lack of reaction by the international community, especially peacekeepers of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) present in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, has emboldened these groups. Their representatives and spokespersons have made public declarations that they will never allow themselves to be disarmed, partly because, as they say, they were invited by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These declarations have even been made on Radio Okapi, the United Nations radio station operated by MONUC in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It seems clear to Rwanda that some members of the international community nurse the hope that, at a given time, the forces that committed genocide in Rwanda will transform themselves, or be transformed into, something more acceptable to both Rwandans and the international community. The attempt is being made. Those groups now write to the Secretary-General of the United Nations from their headquarters in Europe and elsewhere. One of the more unexplainable and unacceptable events during the preparatory process for the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region is the fact that the United Nations Secretariat disseminated an application for those forces to attend the Conference as observers. It is also a fact that the United Nations has made it clear that the best it can do is call for voluntary disarmament of the ex-FAR/Interahamwe.

Rwanda would like the Security Council to recall that the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement of 1999, which ended the inter-State war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, had four main pillars: a cessation of hostilities; the holding of an inter-Congolese dialogue; the withdrawal of foreign forces; and the disarmament of negative armed groups, including, in particular, the ex-FAR/Interahamwe. Of the four pillars, only the last required the presence of United Nations forces. The region took responsibility for the cessation of hostilities, the holding of an inter-Congolese dialogue; and the withdrawal of foreign troops was voluntary. It should be unacceptable to the Security Council that the only pillar that remains unfulfilled is precisely the one which required the presence and involvement of United Nations peacekeeping forces. Clearly, voluntary disarmament would not require the United Nations to dispatch thousands of troops and spend hundreds of millions of dollars per year. Rwanda believes that MONUC should refocus itself, with an emphasis on a clear mandate to disarm the genocidal forces, and do this expeditiously. Failure to do so will inevitably lead to an increase in tension in the region, and would fundamentally undermine the transitional processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi.

Rwanda does not consider that resolving the problem of the genocidal forces is a matter for Rwanda alone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone or even a matter between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is a matter for the Security Council, in the context of its mandate to address threats to international peace and security.

We therefore ask once again, for how long will the Rwandan people have to live with the spectre of genocide on their doorstep? We have waited 10 years for an answer from the Security Council. We find it difficult to wait any longer.

What are the options in resolving this problem? We have repeatedly called on the Congolese authorities to deal with this situation decisively. Cognizant of stated incapacities of that country and the lack of an effective response from the international community, we have offered to work jointly with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to deal with this problem. This has been rejected. We have even been willing to place Rwandan troops under Congolese command and control to deal with the problem. This has not been accepted either. It seems to us that Rwanda is expected to simply wait and fold its arms while its people are killed, its infrastructure is destroyed and destabilization continues. This Rwanda is not willing to do.

States members of the Security Council recognize that the overriding responsibility of any State to its people is to protect and defend them when they are under threat. The Rwanda Government recognizes this as not only a responsibility but as an obligation to its people. We lost 1 million people to genocide and hate. We cannot allow it to continue any longer. We also cannot allow threats to our people and their livelihoods to continue to haunt us even now, 10 years after the genocide. We must protect and defend our people. If my Government were to fail in this task it would be failing in its most basic duty. We will not allow that to happen.

We request that the present letter be circulated as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Stanislas **Kamanzi**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative